1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

roos,[1] wildfowl, and other game, keen eyesight is essential, hence Tiwi men did very little hunting once they were past about forty-five, though they hated to admit their hunting days were over. The meat, fish, and game provided for the large household of an old man was obtained by the young men, and this was about the only thing an old man thought his sons or his step-sons were good for. Typically the young man, when he returned at nightfall with a kangaroo which he had spent most of the day tracking down and spearing, would ignore the old man and dump the carcass at the feet of his mother as if to say, "I brought this back for you, not for that old So and So."

As the women straggled back to camp toward sundown with the results of their day's gathering and the young hunters brought in their bags, cooking began and the main meal of the day (usually the only hot meal) was eaten. The Tiwi themselves had no doubt about the close relationship between plural marriage and good eating. "If I had only one or two wives I would starve," the head of a large household once told the missionary who was preaching against plural marriage, "but with my present ten or twelve wives I can send them out in all directions in the morning and at least two or three of them are likely to bring something back with them at the end of the day, and then we can all eat." This was a realistic appraisal of the economic situation and it is to be noted that he put the emphasis on the food obtained by the women gatherers rather than that supplied by the male hunters. Based on the observations of 1928-29, it would appear that the Tiwi ate pretty well, especially in the larger households. Kangaroo and other marsupials, and some of the larger lizards (for example, the goanna) were very plentiful in the bush, as were fish and turtles and dugong on the coasts and wild geese in many districts. But all these were extras or dividends; the staple everyday foods were the vegetable foods gathered day after day in apparently unending quantities by the women. For most months of the year there was always plenty of *kwoka*, a porridgelike dish prepared by soaking and mashing the small nuts of a native palm. These nuts grew in such quantity that in every large camp baskets or dishes of *kwoka*, at various stages of preparation, were always available, even for midnight snacks if anybody woke up hungry. *Kwoka* was about as dull and tasteless as Scotch porridge, but equally filling, and naked small boys full of *kwoka* had stomachs distended like balloons. In the wet season the place of *kwoka* was taken by *kolema*, a yam whose ripening and growing season was much shorter than that of the nuts from which *kwoka* was made. It was on the abundance of the *kolema* yams during January and February that the Tiwi supported the more elaborate of their collective ceremonials.

The abundance of these and other vegetable foods, plus the ample supply of game and fish in many places, meant that under aboriginal conditions the Tiwi lived at a food-consumption level much further above the near-

[1] Actually there are no kangaroos on Melville and Bathurst Islands; the chief meat animal is a slightly smaller species of marsupial technically called the wallaby. As the distinction is important only to zoologists, and as many of the so-called kangaroos in American zoos are in fact wallabies, we prefer to use the more familiar word.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

The White-Cockatoo woman, Milapukala, at Milapuru

A white-cockatoo woman, *Milapukala*, made a large freshwater lagoon at Milapuru, near Cape Fourcroy, south-western Bathurst Island. At the same time she created opossums, wallabies, carpet snakes, many kinds of lizards, hives of wild honey and many other foods so that she, and later the aborigines, would have plenty to eat.

The central black oval on Pl. 16c, is the lagoon, the totem place of the white cockatoo-woman, the short radiating lines between this and the white oval being groups of rushes on the edge of the water.

The large white oval represents the backwaters of Milapuru, and the outer black oval, the red soil of the surrounding uplands. The radiating lines between these ovals are pandanus trees growing along the shores.

The Pandanus-tree woman, Miatrina, at Primadua

At the command of *Tukimbini*, the *Miatrina* women and their children travelled to Primadua, southern Bathurst Island to establish a totemic centre.

On Pl. 18a, the bark hut of the *Miatrina* women is shown as a black oval in the centre of the painting. This hut is now a submerged rock, called Purupatimu. The dark-coloured band, *a*, *a*, a red sandbar encircling Purupatimu, was once the grass and leaves which the mythical women pushed back when they were cleaning the ground for their camp.

The small white discs (the breasts of the *Miatrina* woman), are now black, submerged rocks; the series of vertical panels (once the children), sandbars in the shallow water; and the two meandering lines, *b*, *b*, (where the children played), salt-water creeks at Primadua. Mungunu, an adjacent locality, is associated with both the *Miatrina* woman and a white cockatoo-woman, *Inkuka*.

The Yam people, Tililindigia and Ubuna, at Primadua

This simple painting, Pl. 18d, about which I gathered but little information, deals with the totem place of two poisonous yams,[48] *Tililindigia* and *Ubuna* at Primadua.

The white oval, the totem place of the yam people, is now a hill at Primadua; the diagonals, outlined in white, are the large *ubuna* yams, and the dark-coloured diagonals, the smaller *tililindigia* yams. The dots represent trees of the Taulama jungle at the base of which trees the aborigines find these yams.

[48] In their raw state these yams are highly poisonous. If, however, they are husked, pounded out flat and soaked in water for several days, the yams are edible.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

chanting *kulama* songs. Later, the decorated initiate, now called a *Marukumuni*, is taken to the camp of the man who captured him. It is the duty of this man, now his guardian, to provide the initiate with food. However, he must not be given snakes, for such food would cause his joints to swell and become painful. [881]

The guardian takes the food he has collected to the *Marukumuni*'s wife who feeds her husband over a period of four days in the same manner as a *pukamuni* man is fed (Pl. 24A). Neither she, nor any of the food he eats must touch the initiate's body. The food left over from the meal is wrapped in paper-bark and burnt. After four days this taboo is lifted and the *Marukumuni* is free to hunt for and eat all foods, except snake.

(2) *The Eating of the Cycad Fruit*

About August, when the fruit of the cycad (*Cycas media*) is ripe, the *Marukumuni* is decorated with a new design (Pl. 42B). At the same time the leader of the *kulama* ceremony instructs the women of the camp to collect and prepare a considerable quantity of the cycad fruit. As the fruit in its raw state is highly poisonous, it has to be shelled, pounded out flat, and soaked in running water for three days before it is edible. When the fruit is ready for eating, the women, putting it in a number of bark baskets, stand them on either side of a log (Pl. 43D). [302] [252]

Then, while the women walk around the baskets, chanting the songs of the *kulama*, two *Mikingulas* wash the design (Pl. 42B), from the *Marukumuni*'s body, and decorate him with a new one (Pl. 42C). This, he must renew continuously until he hears the first sounds of thunder (about mid-November). [533] [302]

As soon as these decorations are completed a member of each family picks up a basket, takes it to their camp, and all have a meal.

The *Marukumuni* initiate, however, is fed by his wife from a separate store of cycad fruit.

At the same time as the *kulama* leader sent the women of the camp to collect and prepare the cycad fruit for the *Marukumuni* rituals, he instructed the women of the *Kilipaniatinga* grade to do the same. However, when the other women of the camp placed their baskets of prepared food beside the log, the *Kilipaniatinga* women poured their cycad fruit on a nearby pad of grass, pushed four sticks into the ground around the heap and seated themselves on the outside.

The ceremonial activity then centred around the men and women of the *Kilipaniati* grade of initiation, who, from the previous *kulama* until then, [301] [881]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

After a pause, another aboriginal entered the ring and sang about the previous singer's dead father. 881 765

(*e*) "My stomach gets hot like fire,[83] when I think of you, my uncle." [533] Some of the women cried when the song was finished. [539]

(7) *Cooking the Kulama Yam*

When the fire had burnt down to a bed of coals, the men picked up the fragments of burning wood, throwing them in all directions, scraped out the glowing embers with sticks, brushed the ashes from the heated termite mound with boughs, and the oven was ready for cooking the *kulama* yams. Meanwhile, one of the men had bound the rushes into a rope, *imbini*, about an inch in diameter, and sufficiently long to encircle the oven. The fragments of heated termite mound were lightly sprinkled with water, the *imbini* rope coiled around them, the yams carefully arranged on top and the whole covered first with thin sheets of newly split paper-bark, then with sand. Care was taken to cover the yams properly, otherwise, the aborigines explained, *tsini*, the *kulama* sickness, would escape and cause blindness to the immediate participants. 252 881

As the oven was being covered, the leader patted the sand to consolidate it (Pl. 442), chanting at the same time, "Brr, Brr, Goodbye, Grandmother, goodbye",[84] in the same way as the owl-man, *Purutjiktini*, did at the first *kulama*. 881 [533] [539]

While the yams were being cooked, the *kulama* people performed the following dances, to the rhythm of sticks beaten by the women. 535 881 [534]

(*a*) The dance of *jiriwa* (silver-crowned friar-bird).

(*b*) Two crocodiles, *jirakupai*, fighting (Pl. 302), followed by two aborigines as crocodiles crawling in the sand.

(*c*) A crocodile; the dancer carrying the goose-feather ball (*tokwianga*) in his mouth to symbolize the prey of the crocodile.

(*d*) The green turtle with the hands and arms of the dancer moving in imitation of the turtle's flippers.

Two young women, when asked to dance, performed:

(*e*) The crocodile, *jirakupai*,

(*f*) The buffalo,

(*g*) The shark (Pl. 300).

[83] The stomach, or solar-plexus, is the location of the *imunka* (spirit), and the seat of the emotions. [826] [774]

[84] The *kulama* yam is looked upon as a female when it is dug up, placed beside the *murinyaloa* tree and immersed in the water for the first time. When taken from the swamp it is male, again becoming female from the time it is put in the oven until it is eaten. [824]

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

(8) *Cutting up the Yams*

881 252 After the yams had been in the oven for about one and a half hours, the men gathered around the oven, felt it, and, after a short discussion began to scrape the warm sand away from the paper-bark covering. As they did so, they pressed handfuls of the warm sand against their elbows, chest, shoulders and knees, believing that this sand made their joints strong and supple (Pl. 45c).

881 When the paper-bark, carefully removed strip by strip, exposed the cooked yams, the women, who had been quietly standing on the outside of the *milimika* murmured reverently, "Ah, *kulama*, ah, *kulama*." Taking the hot yams from the oven each man held them against his chest, and his [827] head. This they said would give them added strength and vitality. The women although they did not participate in this ritual, sent their children into the *milimika* to have the yams pressed against their bodies so that they would grow to healthy and strong adults.

[177] [533] As the men peeled the yams, exposing the soft, yellow flesh, they sang about preparing and eating various kinds of food belonging to the white man,[85] "cutting bread for a meal, carving steak from a bullock and roasting it on the coals, cooking the tongue of a bullock, eating corn beef", and so on. When all the yams were peeled they were left on a sheet of bark whilst [412] [177] everyone had a meal and a sleep. In the late afternoon the *kulama* men started to slice the yams (cockle shells, *irakapi*, were used before the advent of steel). As they did so, the men mashed up some of the sliced *kulama* between the palms of the hands, mixed this with red ochre, and each rubbed it on his hair, face, whiskers and body. This, they believed, aided by the earlier rituals, would ensure them good health until the next *kulama*.

(9) *Initiation of the Kilipaniatis and Mikinatrinas*

The sliced yams were put in the basket, and stood in the centre of the *milimika*. A *kulama* man walked into the forest, and collected a length of flexible vine. Returning to the *milimika* he bent the vine round the necks of the male *Marukumunis* and the female *Marukumuningas* in such a way that it could not be removed. These initiates were then *Kilipaniatis* and *Kilipaniatingas* respectively. This neck ornament, which had a number of cords [301] hanging from it, is called a *mariguani* (Pl. 42b). After these initiates had been further decorated with bark armlets, *tjunguti*[86] (Pl. 42d and e), and cane

[85] No doubt, in times past, they sang about abundant supplies of their own favourite foods.

[86] Spencer, 1928, illustrates the bark armlets, *tjunguti*, on Pl. XI and the belt, *aburini*, on Pl. IX, No. 1.

11:Goodale E-5 (1954, 1962) 1963 CE20 Tiwi CE20

884 tive, community ceremony, its benefits accrued only to individual participants, and then only to those who had followed the complex procedures correctly. Thus it was vitally important to every Tiwi individual, male or female, to receive instruction in the *Kulama* ritual before being considered a fully adult member of the tribe. The instruction period lasted six years, during which the initiates, among other requirements, had to participate actively in six *Kulama* rituals. Following this training, the individuals were considered responsible adults by other members of the tribe, but only through continued participation in the ritual could that condition be maintained.

[178] TODAY the ritual is still performed by those who believe in it, and it will probably continue until the last initiated Tiwi dies, or until the underlying meaning is totally lost and is replaced by ideas of how to be successful that have their origins in Western thought.

[262] [258] The ceremony itself takes three days to complete and centers on the preparation of a toxic variety of yam, the *Kulama*. To make this yam edible, it must first be soaked. It is then baked, mashed, and again soaked for a time in fresh water. Even after the poisons have been removed by this elaborate process, an extremely bitter taste remains. The Tiwi say they never eat the yam except at the conclusion of the *Kulama* ceremony. Those who believe in the ritual say the yam has tremendous power for causing good or evil, and thus one must handle the yam carefully during the preparation, speak to it softly, sing to it at times, and always treat it with respect. The individual absorbs the power of the yam by touching it, by rubbing the body with it, and finally by eating it. All these steps are ritualized. Special digging sticks are made, and, contrary to the usual practice of having the women gather plants, only men

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[TEXT CONTINUES ON P. 13(8)...Author]

[P. 12, (C)]

11;Goodale E-5 (1964,1965) 1968 CH20 Tiwi CH20

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YAMS TO BE USED in *Kulama* ceremony are retrieved from a fresh-water pool in which they had been soaked overnight.

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[177]

For instance,
The composer of the following song had just returned from Brisbane, where he and a group of eight other aborigines had performed dances in honor of Queen Elizabeth's 1954 visit to Australia:

[539]

"The Queen was talking in England,
'I would like to see a blackfellow dance.'
When I was in Brisbane, the Queen said,
'I would like to meet a black boy!'
And I went up.
King Philip, he had a good look at me.
He was watching a lot as I danced.
I was singing into a loud-speaker."

[173]

Some songs are historic in nature, retelling an event that must be kept alive according to the traditions of the tribe. One such composition recalls the Japanese attack on Darwin during World War II:

[539]

"An enemy plane flies low over Melville Island.
The men on the ground, at the word 'Standby,'
Shoot it down with a cannon."

The children of the singer are often song subjects. This first example describes how the children behaved in one of their father's dreams.

[539]

"My children have gone to the other side
of the island.
But they must come back as they are hard up
for tobacco.
My children have now come back.
I know this for they have taken the tobacco
which I have held in my hand."

or

"My children will wear clothes and shoes.
They will go to school and learn to write."

All the songs have the same chanting tune, which is associated with the *Kulama* ceremony, and the composer must fit his words to the set meter of the chant. In many cases this requires using archaic words that are no longer a

[P. 14, (1)]

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Young girl and boy accompany fathers as men bring yams from pool to the ceremonial ring. There the yams will be

[Fr. 15, (1)]

baked by placing them atop pieces of anthill heated to a glow by wood fire, then covering the yams with hot earth.

MAN LIGHTS FIRE beneath chunks of anthill. When the pieces are red-hot, burning wood below them will be brushed away.

11-Goodrich 2-6 (1964, 1969) 1963 CBS Text CBS

11:Goodale E-5 (1954, 1962) 1965 CE20 Tiwi CE20

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HOT EARTH over baked *Kulama* yams is removed. Yams that are to be eaten at end of ritual must be resoaked in water.

[824]

SOME COOKED YAMS are cut, peeled, and mashed. Water and paint are then added. Yams are always handled with respect.

[951]
[858]

MEN RUB MASH on bodies to insure health, then do so to the uninitiated young, whose health is paternal responsibility.

[P. 16, (A)]

12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 O120 Tiwi O120

the water and declared, "it was o. k. for *murandanga*," meaning that it was not too stagnant or brackish for my health. By digging up some of the wet sand from the bottom of the well, the water seeped in to fill the void and soon we had our two containers filled. By this time Albert had started the fire and unpacked our canned rations. 123

One billy was placed on the fire for "tea leaf" and we broke open some corned beef and a loaf of fresh bread thoughtfully provided by the Superintendent's wife. When the billy boiled, a handful of tea and two handfuls of sugar were added and the pot set aside to cool. Big Jack had in the meantime gone over the dunes to look at the sea, and he reported that the wind was still too strong to allow us to continue in comfort and safety. We might as well take it easy for an hour or two and wait for it to calm down, he said. Almost immediately Albert and Agnes were fast asleep, their heads resting on tins of beef. Big Jack, however, took the axe and wandered off into the bush in back of the camp. After an hour it was obvious that the wind had no intention of dying, so we roused ourselves and strolled off down the beach in search of turtle eggs. We saw many tracks of the female turtles where they had lumbered out of the water up to high-water mark, and the mounds of sand kicked up while they dug their deep nests. Using a long, slender stick, Albert probed around these mounds hoping to feel the soft resistance of the rubbery eggs. Time and again he probed in a different nest quite unsuccessfully. Criscrossing one of the tracks leading to a nest were many little ones returning to the water; these eggs had lived to hatch. Finally Albert gave up, remarking, "That Black Joe mob make plenty big feast turtle egg." Late in the afternoon we returned empty handed. 123 222

Fortunately Big Jack, hunting along the little, mangrove-lined creek close by, had not had such bad luck. He soon appeared carrying three of the large mangrove crabs, their massive claws tightly closed with bindings of bark strips. The two main logs of the noon fire were still smouldering, and by adding to them we soon had a fast-burning blaze. When a glowing bed of coals was available, the crabs were thrown on top where they were soon steaming away in their own juices. It was a delicious supper—tender, sweet crab- 123 [252]

123 meat, lukewarm tea, and the remains of the fresh bread smothered in jam for dessert.

The sky by this time was growing dark for thick, heavily laden clouds were fast building up. With what light remained from the setting sun we shifted camp to a small hollow in the dunes, free from the prickly seed pods and protected from the wind. Soon it was quite dark and the wind seemed to blow more strongly. Albert, afraid for the safety of the canoe, decided to remove it to the quiet waters of the little creek where Big Jack had found the crabs. Big Jack accompanied him and while they were gone Agnes prepared to make some "damper." She built the fire up again so that the 123 ground would become very hot. While it was burning down she ●252 took the bag of flour, opened it, and made a small depression in 372 the contents. Into this hole she poured baking powder, salt, and water from the billy. (Quite often the first two ingredients are 484 omitted.) With both hands still in the bag she worked the mixture into a large lump of dough which she removed and flattened on the outside of the flour bag. By this time the fire had again burned down, and the burning coals were brushed aside and a hole scooped out in the hot sand. The damper, about the size of a large frying pan, was laid in the hole and covered over with more hot sand. "Tomorrow, we make quick breakfast and no stop for lunch," she explained. In about an hour, during which the damper had been turned once, it was removed and the sand brushed from the rough, tough surface. It was then carefully wrapped in a piece of calico and put away in safety.

It was only then that we realized that the men had not returned. 123 Agnes became quite worried, and I must confess I did also. We walked down to the water's edge and called out, but could hear no reply over the roar of the waves, and because of the inky blackness we could see only a few yards. After about ten minutes we returned to the camp and in a brief time both men appeared. Agnes immediately demanded to know why, if they were so close, they didn't answer our calls? Albert insisted that he had replied, so after a while Agnes changed her question to why had it taken them [481] so long? "Water bin come in long way," Albert replied, "I swim out; take long time find him canoe." When one considers that,

ping the axe with his teeth, he ran up the sapling on all fours with as much agility as a monkey. Upon reaching the crotch, he put his arms around the trunk, placed the soles of his feet close together against the bark, and quickly progressed in a sort of leaping motion up to the top of the tree. Once there he casually climbed up, over, and around the various branches, until he reached the object of his climb, the hollow branch with the little hole through which was passing a steady stream of small insects. This branch was quickly cut through and fell crashing to the ground. Soon Albert was down again, investigating this find with Agnes and me. The hole was enlarged and the combs of dark honey exposed, still crawling with the little black bees. We dug in with our fingers or brushes made by chewing small twigs, quite unmindful of the bees, who obligingly never developed stings in this part of the world. The honey was dark and very strong, but when mixed with the dry, crumbly, yellow "bee bread" a nice balance of taste was obtained. It took the three of us very little time to finish the sugar-bag and off we went—this time in a homeward direction.

The one possum looked very small and Albert again began muttering about "someone *mobuditi* make me bad luck." We separated again and when almost to the creek Agnes suddenly held me back and cautioned silence. Carefully she picked up a stout stick from the ground and then approached what I suddenly noticed was a very fat goana, about two feet long, apparently sound asleep on a nearby tree trunk. One quick blow and the lizard fell to the ground, quite dead. We carried the catch to the landing and quickly had another swim before Albert caught up. We were gathering firewood when Albert arrived and explained his delay by holding up another possum. The second possum was immediately gutted, then both were laid on the fire and turned frequently until all the fur had been burned off and the skin made brittle. The animals were quartered and laid again on the fire until well roasted. The goana received no preliminary treatment before going on the fire. When all were cooked, they were removed and laid on a "table" of clean, green leaves, and we reached in and tore off pieces of the steaming, juicy meat. It is impossible to describe this meat to someone who has not tasted it. All I can say is that it was tender and tasty and perfectly